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TAPPING INTO AMES' WATER

By SARAH LOGHRY

Iowa State is known for its efforts in “going green.” Stickers on light switches about conserving energy, reCYcling bins on the street and solar-powered trash compactors on Central Campus give it away, but we get the idea. While the new trend is all about saving the planet, there are a few things that sometimes override that desire — things like convenience and money.

It's easy to walk into a store and buy bottles of water, but how much does that water really cost? According to the Food and Drug Administration, Americans consume around 7.5 million gallons of water per year. That averages out to about 26 gallons of water per person annually. (Do you have to pee yet?)

If all you drank were brand name bottled waters like Smartwater, Fiji and Aquafina, **it would cost you \$156 per year.** On the opposite end, you could be shelling out only \$23 a year if you bought off-brand cases of water.

What about the rumor telling everyone they shouldn't refill disposable plastic water bottles? In 2005, someone thought it would be a good idea to take a college student's thesis and pass it off as fact. A vicious chain e-mail circulated the Internet for years warning of cancer-causing chemicals in the plastics of some bottles of water. However, the Environmental Protection Agency has done extensive research on the chemical and says that it is of no harm to people, but they do suggest washing your water bottle with soap and water.

Some people think buying water filters that either connect directly to their faucet or come in a pitcher form can save them money in the long run. These brands, like Brita, PUR and Filtrete run between \$28 and \$38. While that one-time purchase seems like it could save money, things like filters that clean the water have to be changed every three to four months. No matter the brand, **you will still be spending at least \$40 per year on new filters.**

The last — and simplest — way to get water is straight from the tap. Many people complain they don't like the taste of tap water or that they don't think it's clean enough. According to the city of Ames, the water is taken from the Squaw and Skunk Rivers, treated, made drinkable and distributed to the community. The EPA sets standards for public drinking water supply, and the the Iowa Department of Natural Resources can also set higher standards if they wish. Pollution-wise, the contamination levels in Ames' water supply are well below the EPA's highest levels allowed. On average, **drinking water from the tap will cost you five cents per year.** That's it. Add that to the price of a reusable water bottle, which ranges from \$4 to \$15, and you can drink quality tap water and buy a brand new water bottle every year for less than purchasing bottled water or a water filter. Maybe now that \$1.25 bottle of water will make you clutch your wallet and walk over to the drinking fountain instead.

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